(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) There is no such proposal under consideration.

Customs Clearance for Cargo at Hyderabad

2406. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that facilities like storage accommodation, security and handling equipment were available at Hyderabad airport for importing air cargo;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Collector of Customs and Central Excise, Hyderabad recommended to the Central Board of Customs and Central Excise that the Hyderabad Collectorate undertakes the clearance of general import cargo;

(c) whether it is a fact that the trade circles have been representing the matter for nearly three years to sanction customs clearance of the general import air cargo at Hyderabad;

(d) whether it is a fact that the clearance of import cargo facility will not only mean optimum utilisation of the cargo air terminal complex at Hyderabad and fuller utilisation of the carrying capacity of the Indian Airlines and Air India but also the fulfilment of the long felt need of the importers; and

(e) what are the reasons for not according the required sanction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) to (e) Hyderabad airport has been notified as a customs airport for import of certain specified items. Representations have been received from the trade for permitting the import of all general cargo through Hyderabad airport. The Andhra Pradesh State Trading Corporation which is running the aircargo complex at Hyderabad has acquired more space for handling import cargo. The Collector of Customs and Central Excise, Hyderabad recommended the request but has sought sanction of additional staff for handling the extra workload. Government is considering allowing more items which are immediately required by the local trade and industry and Collector of Customs and Central Excise has been asked to identify these items in consultation with the local trade and industry. He has also been asked to get the existing central excise staff trained in a major custom house for handling customs work pending sanction of the additional staff required by him and to make infrastructural arrangements for starting increased import cargo clearance work at short notice in consultation with the other Government agencies concerned.

Drying up of Cherrapunji Area in Meghalaya

2407. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Cherrapunji, the wettest place on earth, is slowly drying up for lack of vegetation;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the area is gradually becoming barren;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the 'Jhum' cultivation practiced by the hill tribals of the North-East has led to large-scale destruction of trees and thereby added to the problem of drying up of the soil; and

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take to improve the situation?